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## ANATOLE FRANCE<sup>1</sup>

Few writers appear to have taken such delight in being paradoxical as has Anatole France. He has maintained that there are no such things as literary standards, and he has produced four volumes of literary criticism. He has denied that there is such a thing as historical science, and he has published two large tomes of serious historical research. He has insisted that there is no such thing as the creative imagination, and he has written nearly thirty volumes of novels and short stories. After declaring in 1886 that the virtues of the soldier "ont enfanté la civilisation toute entière," he affirms in 1893 that men are "légers et vains . . . pour mettre les ruines de la guerre à plus haut prix que les arts de la paix."<sup>2</sup> In 1914 he returns to his first position, seeking, at the age of seventy, to enlist in the French army, and publishing a few months later in 1915 a book on the European war, entitled *Sur la voie glorieuse*. The author who wrote "souffrir . . . là seulement est la véritable joie" (*Jardin d'Epicure*, p. 62) writes, a decade or so later, "N'écoutons pas les prêtres qui enseignent que la souffrance est excellente. C'est la joie qui est bonne."<sup>3</sup> The skeptic and conservative whose candidacy for the Academy was supported as recently as 1896 by the aristocratic coterie in preference to that of the anti-clerical Ferdinand Fabre,<sup>4</sup> appears during the *Affaire* and after as a socialist and a radical. These changes of position, especially the last, make Anatole France a perplexing figure. They raise the question: Is there any real unity in his character and his works? Is he a chameleon, or are his inconsistencies merely superficial? Are his books reflections of

<sup>1</sup> G. Michaut, *Anatole France: étude psychologique*. Paris: Fontemoing, 1913. Pp. xxxv + 306.

Victor Giraud, "M. Anatole France" (in *Les Maîtres de l'heure*, II, 179-310). Paris: Hachette, 1914.

W. L. George, *Anatole France*. New York: Holt, 1915. Pp. 128. For important suggestions in connection with this review I am indebted to Professor S. P. Sherman, of the University of Illinois. Professor Kenneth McKenzie and other colleagues have likewise favored me with helpful criticism.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Giraud, pp. 239, 259.

<sup>3</sup> Giraud, p. 269.

<sup>4</sup> G. Brandes, *Anatole France* (New York, 1908), p. 34 (where the date is incorrectly given as 1897).

passing moods, or are their tendencies fairly uniform? It is this problem that the three books here under discussion attempt to solve.

We shall first take up the views of the three critics on this most important issue, and try to reach some conclusion as to the essential quality of the work of Anatole France. We shall then pass to an examination of the three studies separately, in order to determine what light each may throw on such matters as the sources of Anatole France and the characteristics of his style.

M. Michaut's essay is intended to be exclusively psychological. He endeavors to analyze the traits of M. France's nature which appear at all periods of his career. The psychology of the author of *Thaïs* is discussed under three headings: *intelligence*, *imagination*, and *sens esthétique et sensibilité*. The following is a brief summary of the conclusions set forth. The intelligence of M. France, wide rather than deep, is that of a dilettante, not that of a systematic thinker. This incapacity for system explains his critical impressionism, his lack of a definite theory of literary values. He is, moreover, not merely incapable of systematizing ideas, but he is purposeless in his interest in ideas. He believes sentiment more important than reason, and has no hope of arriving at absolute truth. Consequently his erudition and his intellectual interests, ranging over all time and all being, natural or supernatural, are forms of idle curiosity. The skeptic regards the spectacle of the universe as meaningless, and is moved by it to irony and sympathy, to the irony which is the most obvious characteristic of his style and the sympathy which is the most pleasing trait of his personality. In the intellectual experiences referred to, all he seeks and all he remembers is his own pleasure; he gets no notion of external reality whatever, but sees only himself. Hence his critical work is an entirely subjective account of the "adventures of his soul," and his novels contain, aside from a few figures which interest him because of their contrast to himself (e.g., Lantaigne, Guitrel, Gamelin), no convincing characters except portraits of his own ego (Bonnard, Bergeret, Brotteaux). In other words, he is entirely lacking in creative imagination. He has no power to breathe life into the materials, derived from experience and literature, from which he constructs his works. This deficiency explains his critical sympathies. A man naturally tends to admire

those who resemble himself. M. France's lack of creative imagination forces him to restrict himself to a slavish reproduction of experience; consequently, he commends only such writers as give a faithful transcript of it, the classical school who portray universal verity, rather than the romantic school who give free rein to imagination. Though without the higher type of imagination, he has a high degree of fancy, which produces those unexpected associations of words and ideas that constitute much of the charm of his style. His ability, indeed, is chiefly stylistic; consequently he reserves his highest approval for merits of form, and prefers the men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who relied upon application, to the men of the nineteenth, who trusted to inspiration. The classicism just outlined becomes less narrow in his later phase. As a critic he is remarkable for the wide range of literature he studies; as a stylist he is notable for the great variety of writers he imitates. He succeeds, however, in fusing the elements derived from them into a style, having an originality of its own, defined as a certain sensuous appeal. The *sensualité* which his literary manner expresses is a fundamental element in his nature, and is at the bottom of all the psychological traits outlined. It also explains his inconsistencies. His change from an indifferent conservatism to a decided radicalism, for example, is due to his tardy recognition of the fact that traditional ideas in morals, philosophy, and religion are "hostiles au plaisir, ennemies de la volupté. . . . Son œuvre est vouée au Désir et à la Volupté."

Such is M. Michaut's conception of France's psychology. M. Giraud's work is much easier to follow. He uses the biographical method and manages expository narrative with skill. He divides the career of the author of the *Histoire contemporaine* into two periods: that previous to the outbreak of the *Affaire* in 1897, and that following it. He indicates certain changes which occurred during the first of these periods. Consequently it seems to me that a more satisfactory division might be a tripartite one: first, a period of dilettantism, ending in 1889, with the discussion over the *Disciple*; this is the period of *Sylvestre Bonnard*, and the dominating influence is that of Renan; secondly, a period of skepticism, ending in 1897, with the *Affaire*; this is the era of the *Opinions de M. Jérôme Coignard*, and Anatole France recalls Montaigne; thirdly, a period

of socialism; this is the epoch of the *Histoire contemporaine*, and during this phase France reminds one of Voltaire. Throughout all these variations Giraud finds that the character of Anatole France does not change fundamentally. The view of it presented is substantially in accord with that of Michaut, though Giraud's more natural plan and greater breadth of mind make his results seem more acceptable. He concludes that M. France's ideas are those of the eighteenth century, of Voltaire and Diderot. The author of the *Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* is essentially an anarchist, "le plus séduisant et le plus dangereux professeur d'anarchie que nous ayons eu depuis Renan."

Mr. George's hurried and somewhat flippant study likewise finds consistency in Anatole France. This consistency, however, is asserted rather than defined. The clearest statement of it seems to be that the "instinct" of the great ironist is "hedonistic," his "reason" humanitarian (p. 24). These tendencies pervade all his work, which is praised without reserve. Even *Les Dieux ont soif*, with its jarring note of hostility to the French Revolution, though preceded and followed by works of strongly socialistic character, can extort from Mr. George no admission of inconsistency: "Irony and pity, pity and hope, it is always the same gospel" (p. 87).

What are we to think of these three different conclusions? Are they hopelessly at variance with one another, or is it possible to disengage from them elements of truth that may be combined into a fairly accurate portrait? If we attempt to do the latter, we must not lose sight of the personal bias of the critics. M. Michaut, before becoming a teacher in the University of Paris, was a professor in the Catholic University of Fribourg in Switzerland. His critical position is that of Brunetière, the great opponent of Anatole France; in other words, he is a decided conservative in matters of religion and politics as well as in questions of literary taste. It has been said that the object of his book is "to undermine the tower of ivory and dethrone the great hereditary prince of the dilettantes."<sup>1</sup> The animus thus picturesquely characterized must not be left out of account in evaluating his conclusions. Nevertheless it is obvious that he is right in insisting upon the importance of the sensual ele-

<sup>1</sup> *The Nation*, XCVIII (1914), 404.

ment in M. France's nature. In this respect the bookseller's son resembles Chateaubriand, Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve. He himself does not scruple to say: "Le désir a conduit ma vie entière."<sup>1</sup> To proceed, however, as Michaut does, to derive all the tendencies of Anatole France's nature from this single source is carrying consistency too far. No one on this side of the Atlantic will readily believe that his lack of creative imagination, his intellectual curiosity, his pity for human misery, and his praise of suffering are all traceable to his sensuous nature.

Like M. Michaut, M. Giraud formerly taught in the Catholic University of Fribourg. He is at present an editor of the *Revue des deux mondes*. Brunetière, it will be remembered, directed this review for many years; it is not surprising, then, that M. Giraud should be as firm an adherent of Brunetière's doctrines as his predecessor. This fact suggests, as before, the need of caution in accepting his conclusions. Still, there can be little doubt that he is justified in stressing the connections of M. France with the eighteenth century. Consider his politics, for example. The man who planned an *Encyclopédie de la révolution* in 1868<sup>2</sup> and published three volumes of socialistic speeches in 1906 is evidently not an advocate of the *ancien régime*. Similarly, in religion, a certain emotional sympathy with Catholic Christianity which he shares with Renan does not alter the fact that both men are at bottom hostile to the church. Men in this country are surprised, nevertheless, to find Renan and France coupled as "anarchists," even if we take the word in a milder sense than it bears in English. We are not disposed to accept the antinomian writings of either as really representative. We do not find the true Renan in the *Abbesse de Jouarre*, nor the true Anatole France in the *Opinions de M. Jérôme Coignard*. France is not fundamentally an indifferentist.

Mr. George<sup>3</sup> is clearly in the right in pointing out that there are elements in France's nature which are worthy of respect. The English writer properly emphasizes that sympathy with human misery

<sup>1</sup> Giraud, p. 179; cited from *L'Homme libre*, May 5, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> Giraud, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> An Englishman educated in France, Mr. George has published *France in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1909), and a number of novels. As he is a radical, the unduly laudatory tone of his *Anatole France* is not surprising.

which tempers the Frenchman's irony and produces his socialism. In this humanitarianism, which M. Giraud largely ignores, we find another eighteenth-century element. It leads us back to Rousseau, with whom M. France has closer affinities than has generally been admitted.<sup>1</sup>

Further evidence that Anatole France's nature is not a shifting quicksand is afforded by his ethical attitude, of which one usually hears little. No one, to be sure, could be farther from being a moralist. Nevertheless he is not devoid of moral principle. It has been said of Lucian, with whom he has been so often compared: "En morale . . . son idéal se réduisait à vivre sagement. . . ." <sup>2</sup> Anatole France formulates his own morality in almost identical terms.<sup>3</sup> He learned it in the garden of Epicurus.

The results we have just arrived at seem to give a reasonably clear portrait of Anatole France. He is physically a voluptuary, intellectually a Voltairian, emotionally a Rousseauist, ethically an Epicurean. These epithets are not all rigorously applicable, however. M. France himself states, for example,<sup>4</sup> that his moral ideal is aesthetic rather than ethical. In so doing he leads us to the most permanent and significant element in his nature. None of the tendencies we have analyzed pervades his work so completely as does his love of the beautiful. There is no sensuality and no skepticism in *Abeille*, little humanitarianism and less morality in *Jérôme Coignard*. There is the passion for *le beau*, however, in every one of his books, from *La Légende de Sainte Radégonde* of 1859 to the *Sur la voie glorieuse* of 1915. He is aflame with that devotion to art which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Giraud, pp. 234-35: "Du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle il accepte et goûte à peu près tout, sauf Rousseau, qu'il ne peut sentir," a notion Giraud supports only by a passage in the *Dieux ont soif* (p. 88; Giraud says wrongly, p. 148), in which Rousseau is called a *Jean-fesse*, in connection with his idea of the goodness of primitive nature, which M. France has always repudiated. M. Giraud has overlooked the important passage, *Vie litt.*, I, 87-88 ("Jean-Jacques a . . . jeté par le monde, avec une éloquence enchanteresse, un sentiment nouveau d'amour et de pitié"), the theory of education set forth in *Sylvestre Bonnard* (pp. 152-53, ed. Wright), and the frequently stressed idea that sentiment is more important than reason (cf. Michaut, pp. 37-39). Note also that Anatole France has two busts of Rousseau in his sitting-room (Frank Harris, *Contemporary Portraits* [New York, 1915], p. 332).

<sup>2</sup> A. and M. Croiset, *Manuel d'histoire de la littérature grecque* (7th ed., Paris, n.d.), p. 764.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the interesting interview recorded by Mr. Harris (*op. cit.*, p. 343). See also the articles published in regard to Bourget's *Disciple* (*Vie litt.*, III, 54-78).

<sup>4</sup> Harris, *loc. cit.*

seems to burn brighter and purer in France than in any country of the modern world; he is a fanatic of that cult of the beautiful which lends dignity and meaning to the lives of Gautier and the Goncourts, of Maupassant and Flaubert. In his striving toward the aesthetic ideal he draws inspiration from the fountain-head at which all French writers have drunk since the Renaissance, from the literatures of Greece and Rome. So completely has this latter-day Alexandrian assimilated their content, and so perfectly has he reproduced their form, that that master of phrase, Jules Lemaitre, once called him *l'extrême fleur du génie latin*. M. France is an artist who takes his place in the classical tradition; this fact was uppermost in the mind of Lemaitre, as in the minds of most readers of Anatole France. Professor Babbitt has voiced their impression in the best definition of the author of *Thaïs* that has hitherto been proposed. M. France is a "humanistic aesthete."<sup>1</sup>

There is, then, a real unity in the life and works of Anatole France. If so, how are we to account for the inconsistencies noticed at the beginning of this review? In undertaking to explain them, it is important not to forget that we are dealing with an ironist. There is an old saying that irony is a knife without a handle; the ironist is frequently distressed to find himself taken literally. Anatole France does not expect his readers to accept his statements without reservation. In other words, as Professor Sherman acutely suggests, "the skepticism of M. France is largely a literary pose."<sup>2</sup> There is not a little of such affectation in the denial of the existence of literary standards. Anatole France hurled Georges Ohnet neck and crop *hors de la littérature*. How could he have done so if he did not believe in some generally acceptable measure of literary values? Like his critical impressionism, his historical impressionism is largely whimsical. No man who writes a book like *Jeanne d'Arc* believes real knowledge of the past impossible. The situation is somewhat different as regards his denial of the creative imagination. It may be that M. Michaut is right in thinking that the deficiency of M. France in the higher forms of this faculty leads him to deny their existence.

<sup>1</sup>*The Masters of Modern French Criticism* (Boston, 1912), p. 321.

<sup>2</sup>*The Nation*, LXXXIX (1909), 96.



The inconsistencies as to militarism are real, but hardly difficult to understand nowadays. The more violent anti-militaristic utterances, moreover, date from the period of skepticism. Hence they are perhaps not to be taken too seriously.

The change from Christian praise of suffering to Epicurean praise of joy is part of a larger change in his attitude toward Catholicism. Before 1897, especially before 1889, he is agnostic but not unfriendly to the church; after 1897 he is violently anti-clerical. This religious shift synchronizes with the political metamorphosis from a conservative to a radical. It is to be explained in the same way. M. Michaut and M. Giraud think it a recrudescence of native tendencies to lawlessness and anarchy. He opposed the church and the nationalists because he feared that a victory for traditionalism would curtail his personal freedom of speech and action. Such an apprehension, it seems to me, would have been rather unfounded. M. Lanson and M. Pellissier would probably find in his change of front a reaffirmation of his original belief in the *philosophes* and the Revolution. They would say that he bravely espoused the cause of Dreyfus because he believed it the cause of justice and truth, and that he stoutly supported Combes and Jaurès because they represented his ideals of democracy and liberty. The second view is more likely to commend itself to Americans.

Such is the idea of Anatole France which one gathers from an unprejudiced perusal of his works, supplemented by the examination of the three books before us. Let us now proceed to a more minute study of these books themselves.

M. Michaut is known as an advocate of the scientific study of contemporary literature.<sup>1</sup> His work on Anatole France is his first attempt on a large scale at such a study of a living writer. One would expect work of this kind to be particularly profitable in regard to details of literary history which might otherwise soon be forgotten, and indeed it is precisely in this direction that the chief value of Michaut's book lies. The Parisian professor has examined with great industry files of old newspapers and reviews in which articles

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the address delivered at the opening session of the *Faculté des Lettres* in the University of Paris, November 5, 1905, and published in *Pages de critique et d'histoire littéraire* (Paris, 1910), pp. 3-37.

appeared which M. France never republished, articles which may some day disappear with the wretched paper on which they are printed. These articles have been particularly fertile in suggestions as to the sources of the larger works. M. Michaut noted, for example, that Anatole France twice mentions in the *Temps* the *Compère Mathieu*, an eighteenth-century novel of the Canon Dulaurens. An examination of this book revealed the fact that it exerted an important influence upon the *Rôtisserie*, particularly in furnishing models for the Abbé Jérôme Coignard. It appears also that M. France does not restrict himself to utilizing the works of others; he sometimes finds models in his own earlier productions. M. Michaut cites (pp. 187 ff.) a number of striking cases in which the author of *La Révolte des Anges* imitates his own works. He not only reworks plots and characters, but he frequently makes literal repetitions. An extensive list of these (Michaut, pp. 194 ff.) includes one case in which the same series of phrases appears five times!

As an aesthetic critic M. Michaut does little that is new, aside from emphasizing and giving copious examples of defects already noted by others. Occasionally one notes a new remark, however. Thus, the faults of taste pointed out on p. 235, n. 2, are real though rare, and have hitherto received little attention. Moreover, Michaut now and then hits off a trait with admirable felicity. In describing, for example, a passage in *Le Mannequin d'osier*, correctly characterized as an imitation of Zola, he says: "Je ne sais quelle mollesse se mêle à la matérialité du tableau. On dirait du Teniers traduit par quelque graveur habitué à reproduire en estampes les œuvres de Greuze ou de Fragonard" (p. 254, n. 1).

We have noted some of the directions in which M. Michaut's work will be found useful. It has also a number of defects which call for comment. In the study of sources, for instance, M. Michaut is more successful when he compares passages in the works of Anatole France than when he makes independent combinations of his own. The latter sometimes seem to be due to over-eagerness. One is not convinced that the passage in *M. Bergeret à Paris* cited on p. 129 is derived from St.-Simon. M. Michaut suggests, again (p. 167, n. 4), that the oft-recurring notion that war is not an art, but a game of chance, comes from an obscure work of Paul-Louis Courier. Since

we have abundant evidence of the influence of Tolstoi upon the author of the *Vie littéraire*,<sup>1</sup> it seems much more probable that M. France derived this idea from the author of *War and Peace*.<sup>2</sup> The Englishman of *Jocaste*, furthermore, reminds one as much of Sir Ralph Brown in George Sand's *Indiana* as of the type familiar in "nos petits journaux et nos caricaturistes" (p. 133). The indications of the sources of the poems (pp. 146 ff.) would gain by being made more precise. The notion that France copied the bookshop in the *Rôtisserie* and its sequel from Voltaire (p. 167) is source-hunting pushed to absurdity. A man born in a bookshop would hardly need a literary model in order to describe one. M. Michaut might have pointed out (p. 182) that the *Comédie de celui qui épousa une femme muette*, the most successful play of M. France, was not merely based on Rabelais, but undertaken for the entertainment of a meeting of the Société des études rabelaisiennes.<sup>3</sup>

Although, as a rule, M. Michaut has utilized very industriously the literature bearing on the borrowings of M. France, he has overlooked in the following cases notes of some value. Thus, he fails to cite the remarks in George Brandes' *Anatole France*,<sup>4</sup> and those in R. Cor's *Anatole France et la poésie contemporaine*,<sup>5</sup> and the interesting notes of Professor C. H. C. Wright.<sup>6</sup> It may be noted in this connection that he inadvertently fails to state that he owes the indication of Daudet's influence upon *Jocaste* (p. 152), and the suggestion he elaborates connecting Jean Servien and Daniel Eyssette (p. 156), to the excellent article of M. Potez.<sup>7</sup>

Certain defects occasioned by M. Michaut's critical bias are more serious than his faults of omission. A certain lack of generosity,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Michaut, pp. xxix and 86, for example.

<sup>2</sup> A remark of my colleague, Dr. J. Zeitlin, has led me to make this suggestion.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the translation of Professor Curtis Hidden Page (New York, 1915), p. 7. It is curious to note the strange statement (Michaut, p. 277, n. 2): "il aime médiocrement Rabelais." Elsewhere (pp. 144, 145, 255, n. 1) M. Michaut notes that Rabelais has been one of France's chief models. It is particularly in his later phase that France has shown himself a most fervent Rabelaisian; the passages in the *Histoire contemporaine* will be familiar to the reader.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. cited, pp. 42, 88, for example.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Paris, 1909, p. 32, n. 2 (Galiani and Voltaire's *Micromégas*).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. his useful school edition of *Sylvestre Bonnard* (New York, 1904?), pp. 266, 271 (Chamfort, Renan).

<sup>7</sup> *Mercur de France*, LXXXIV (1910), 11.

for example, appears in various references to details of M. France's life. Thus the difficulty with which he writes and the gradual progress by which his style attained "à la perfection ou même à la correction" (!)<sup>1</sup> is twice (p. 135, n. 5, p. 194) stressed, although, France himself, as Michaut notes (p. 225, n. 2), makes no secret of the fact that for him "easy reading's curst hard writing." One regrets that so much emphasis should be laid upon various more or less valid evidences that France feels he lacks social distinction (p. 73, n. 5).<sup>2</sup> On the various occasions on which Anatole France crossed swords with Brunetière, he treated his adversary with marked courtesy. M. Michaut endeavors to show that this suave manner cloaked rancorous hatred (pp. 293-94), but his exposition tends rather to convince an unprejudiced reader that the author of the *Vie littéraire* showed remarkable forbearance to a bitter opponent.

The hostility shown in the occasional remarks upon Anatole France's life appears even more clearly in the estimates of his works. Though some of the strictures are just, some seem to miss the mark. Thus the determined attack (pp. 137-39) upon the verisimilitude of that delightful trifle, *Crainquebille*, seems to indicate a certain lack of humor. M. France's repetitions are very numerous, it is true, but M. Michaut stresses them too much. The reader who does not read the works in close succession is not troubled by them. The critical articles are accused of being wearisome to read *seriatim*; there are few critical notices which are not! In general, M. Michaut, like other writers, seems to me to undervalue the critical work of M. France. It is true that many of the articles in the *Vie littéraire* have little or nothing to do with literary criticism; in other cases, however, the impressionist shows that he knows how to read and how to make others read. He has made possible a proper appreciation of the French classics for more readers than one. One does not see why the disconnected form of the *Jardin d'Epicure* is *cynique* (p. 142). Besides giving an accurate notion of the unsystematic tendencies

<sup>1</sup> There is a note of censoriousness in the criticisms (p. 112, n. 2): "Remarquer l'incorrection: 'des petits carrés,'" and (p. 136, n. 2): "Remarquer encore l'incorrection: 'des nouveaux venus.'"

<sup>2</sup> Curiously enough, nothing is said of the most striking passage in which France refers to the distress that may be caused by defects of manner. In *Les Sept Femmes de la Barbebleue*, Jeronimo, the talented statesman, "ne se console pas de manquer d'aristocratie et d'élégance. Il n'est pas heureux" (p. 212-3).

of M. France's intellect (p. 142), it expresses many of his most characteristic ideas and gives, of all his works, the clearest notion of the earlier phase of his philosophy of life. Much as one may dislike the unrelieved irony of the *Ile des Pingouins*, it is hardly "le plus médiocre de ses ouvrages" (p. 270); others might reserve that bad eminence for *M. Bergeret à Paris*. There is occasionally a certain condescension in the admiration expressed for this or that trait. We are told that M. France tells and retells the story of his early years "sans se lasser jamais—et, disons-le, sans nous lasser" (p. 98). The tone is a little patronizing in speaking of some of the most charming pictures of childhood in all literature.

The defects just noted suggest those of Brunetière. Michaut has also a share of the weaknesses noticeable in some of the disciples of M. Lanson, though not in their master. He has more than a touch of *fichomanie*. The heavy and inartistic accumulation of facts makes his book rather unattractive. It would have been better, for instance, to throw the long enumeration of repeated articles or portions of them (pp. 205 ff.) into an appendix, and make it complete, instead of merely *fastidieuse* (p. 209).<sup>1</sup>

In a number of mechanical details M. Michaut's book is faulty in execution. He usually fails to give extracts from the newspaper articles referred to, though they are not readily accessible. He gives no index, though the great amount of erudite machinery in his book would seem to require one. The references to pages are by no means impeccable, and the quotations far from exact. Not infrequently passages are cited in quotation marks which are simply paraphrases or summaries of the original text. Some references are extremely vague, as, "Cf. Débats, 1912" (p. 284, n. 4). There are a considerable number of misprints. It is much to be desired that M. Michaut should publish a complete bibliography of Anatole France, indicating the subjects of all the articles interred in newspapers, pending their republication. His extensive labors in this field have doubtless supplied him with all the materials needed for such a list.

Such a bibliography would suitably form part of the biography of Anatole France which M. Michaut has in preparation. This

<sup>1</sup> Michaut fails to note, for example, that pp. 213-25 of the *Jardin d'Epicure* are repeated from the *Vie littéraire*, IV, pp. ii-x.

*étude biographique*, he promises us, will treat from a "dynamic" point of view the personality discussed in the present *étude psychologique* from a "static" point of view. It is to be regretted that M. Michaut should have planned two works rather than one. The reader of the present volume is hampered by the lack of biographical details, and the reader of the book to come will doubtless be annoyed by frequent references to its predecessor. The arrangement according to psychological topics, moreover, is infinitely less clear and natural than a narrative in historical sequence. Thus, in order to point out how this or that psychological trait leaves its impression in the writings of Anatole France, M. Michaut is forced to pass in review all the principal works of the master no less than five times. The plan likewise precludes the adequate discussion of the principal influences which molded the young Thibault—Taine, Renan, Sainte-Beuve, Leconte de Lisle.

M. Michaut's book is valuable chiefly for the light it casts upon the sources and literary methods of Anatole France. Many of the stylistic and structural defects it illustrates are real and justly emphasized. As an explanation of the personality of the author of the *Lys rouge*, *sensualité*, though containing a certain amount of truth, is not a satisfactory formula. The work is disfigured by prejudice and over-elaboration, and its plan does not permit a clear and complete treatment of the theme.

In the latter respect, as we have seen, M. Giraud's work is superior to that of his predecessor, being arranged in chronological order. It has other advantages over it, such as being more largely devoted to aesthetic criticism. Herein lies its chief value. Though M. Giraud reaches conclusions essentially similar to those of his predecessor, he is generally less prejudiced and less dominated by a theory. His praise is less grudging. "Il n'y a peut-être pas, dans toute la littérature française depuis *Dominique*, de roman aussi 'bien écrit' que le *Lys rouge*" (p. 252). His characterizations are generally just and often admirably expressed. France "est né miniaturiste, bien plutôt qu'artiste à fresque" (p. 245). Now and then Giraud corrects the judgment of Michaut, as when he notes that M. Fellaire de Sissac, whom his predecessor (p. 109) thinks a lay figure, is *un assez vivant fantoche* (p. 220), or in his fuller appreciation of the reality and relief of

many of the characters in the *Histoire contemporaine* (p. 275). There are good remarks upon stylistic details. It is pointed out, for instance (p. 249, n. 2), that France, like Loti, is fond of inclosing a substantive between two adjectives to secure an effect like that sought after by our "imagists."

M. Giraud's book is again in contrast to that of M. Michaut in giving much less attention to sources. Nevertheless there are occasional indications of interest in this connection. It is curious to learn that the title of the *Jardin d'Epicure* comes from Sainte-Beuve (p. 260), and it is suggestive to find the funeral of Chevalier in the *Histoire comique* compared with that of Désirée Delobelle in *Fromont jeune et Risler aîné* (p. 283). One would like to have evidence in support of the idea (p. 184) that the satirical portrait of a frivolous grandmother in the *Livre de mon ami* really depicts M. France's grandmother.

The less abundant information about sources in M. Giraud's book is due to the fact that he is interested primarily in ideas and aesthetic questions, and not to any lack of thoroughness. Like M. Michaut, the editor of the *Revue des deux mondes* has examined the whole corpus of M. France's works, including the articles in newspapers and periodicals which have not been reprinted. He gives extracts from those of the latter which he cites, being here again superior to his predecessor. Moreover, he has not neglected the prefaces to editions of French classics, which usually have received less attention than they deserve.

Such are the principal merits of M. Giraud's study. I have already touched upon its chief defect: a tendency to be unduly severe. This hostility does not show itself very clearly in the earlier part of the article. The sketch of Anatole France previous to 1897 is on the whole acceptable. One wishes that the author had been able to complete the study in the same style and spirit. Such is not the case. In treating of M. France the partisan, he himself becomes a partisan. The calm tone of the first part of the discussion disappears, and questions not directly related to literature occupy an unduly important place. In discussing *Jeanne d'Arc*, for example, the question of France's attitude toward the miraculous is treated at considerable length and with more than a little feeling. Political

considerations also enter into this part of the book, sometimes with amusing results. In order to demonstrate that France is an "anarchist," we are impressively informed that a copy of *Crainquebille* was found in the "repaire" of "un des plus sinistres compagnons de la bande tragique" (p. 282)! One wonders whether *Crainquebille* had anything to do with his sinistrosity!

Though the occasional remarks upon points of literary history and biography are as a rule accurate, a few of them call for some revision. One is a little surprised that M. Giraud finds France's attachment to the eighteenth century somewhat perplexing. He suggests, among other explanations (p. 195), a reaction against the family, his father having been a legitimist. With the abundance of eighteenth-century literature surrounding the young Thibault<sup>1</sup> and the republican tendencies rife among the youth of the later Empire, to which M. Giraud alludes, one does not find much difficulty in understanding the attitude of the author of the *Rôtisserie*. M. Giraud is a little severe (p. 211) in his strictures upon France's erudition; whatever his deficiencies, the man who wrote *Thaïs* is assuredly more learned than most men of letters of his rank. I have heard one of the most distinguished Hellenists living refer to France as a "great scholar."

M. Giraud's suggestion (p. 286) that *Jeanne d'Arc* dates in part from a long time before the period of its publication might have been further supported by the statement made by M. du Bled in September, 1887,<sup>2</sup> that the author of *Sylvestre Bonnard* was preparing a *Jeanne d'Arc*. M. du Bled also states that France was writing a book to be called *Les Autels de la Peur*, which M. Michaut identifies with *Les Dieux ont soif*. It will be remembered that *Les Dieux ont soif* (1912), though preceded and followed by definitely socialistic utterances, sounds a discordant note of utter disillusionment. Is it not probable that this anomaly is to be explained by the fact that the story was in large part written many years before it was published?

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Lanson's keen remark (*Pages choisies d'Anatole France* [Paris, 1898], p. iii) that the books commonest on the Quai Malaquais are eighteenth-century works and theological literature. Consequently, Lanson thinks, France developed "une irréductible incrédulité et une sympathique intelligence des formes de la foi." M. H.-M. Casset (*Anatole France* [Angers, 1915], p. 14) attributes France's sympathy with the Revolution to the influence of his friend Etienne Charavay.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue illustrée*, cited by Michaut, p. 225, n. 2.



It is surprising that M. Giraud cites (p. 181, n. 1) only the bibliography of Le Brun,<sup>1</sup> but not the fuller one given by R. Cor.<sup>2</sup> There are occasional lapses in references, and a few misprints.

M. Giraud is right in stressing Anatole France's connections with the eighteenth century. He gives aesthetic estimates of the earlier works which are as a rule admirable in accuracy and style. His idea that M. France is an anarchist, however, seems unacceptable, and his appreciations of the later books are clouded by partisan feeling.

The third book before us, that of Mr. George, is of little value. It is interesting chiefly for its eccentricities. It is diverting to read that France's characters are "unusually living" (p. 103), and entertaining to hear (p. 26) that "he may share the fate of Flaubert, who is menaced; of de Maupassant, who is going; . . . of Tolstoy, convicted as a moralist . . . " ! The discovery that the Utopia in *Sur la pierre blanche* is "very different from Mr. Wells'" (p. 97), on which it is obviously modeled, is unexpected. The style is marked by an undignified striving for effect. ". . . Everything was done to keep him down: the Académie française went so far as to give him a prize" (p. 11).

To sum up the foregoing review, M. Michaut's book is of use especially for information as to sources; M. Giraud's study is of value particularly for aesthetic criticism; Mr. George's volume is of interest as an expression of uncritical admiration. M. Michaut terms Anatole France a sensualist; M. Giraud calls him an anarchist; Mr. George thinks him a hedonistic humanitarian. All of these formulae contain elements of truth; none of them is entirely acceptable. The best statement we have is that of Professor Babbitt: M. France is a humanistic aesthete. As we have said, we may define some others of his more important traits with fair accuracy thus: he is physically a voluptuary, intellectually a Voltairian, emotionally a Rousseauist, and morally an Epicurean.

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<sup>1</sup> Published in his *Anatole France*, in the series entitled "Célébrités d'aujourd'hui" (Paris, 1904).

<sup>2</sup> *M. Anatole France et la pensée contemporaine* (Paris, 1909), pp. 85-92.